

Farewell 'Mr Mayor'

Duxbury lost one of its pillars last week with the passing of Jack Canty. The late Clipper founder John Cutler was fond of referring to his friend Jack as 'Mr Mayor'. It was an apt nickname for a man who served the town of Duxbury in some capacity for more than half a century.

When Jack resigned from the zoning board of appeals in 1993, we wrote an editorial lamenting his departure. At the time Jack joked to us that the piece would make a fine obituary.

He was wrong. It would only make *half* of a fine obituary.

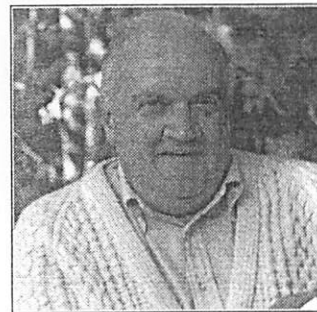
Jack's departure turned out to be merely a short sabbatical. Shortly thereafter he returned to the board and continued his service to the town up until the very end of his life.

We have reprinted the editorial in question because it was one of Jack's wishes and because it gives us a glimpse of the measure of the man. For a more complete sketch of Jack please also read the eloquent eulogy by Eileen Williams on the opposite page.

Canty's Departure a Sorry Loss for Duxbury

(The following editorial appeared in the Aug. 25, 1993 issue of the Clipper)

Selectmen received a surprise resignation letter from long-time Zoning Board of Appeals member Jack Canty this week. Since volunteer public servants can't be hired or fired quite the way paid employees are, it isn't possible to reject a resignation but in Canty's case that's exactly what should happen.



lems in a growing community and love for the bay landed him a seat on the 1963 Police Station Building Committee and two years later, the Waterfront Advisory Committee, where he has essentially

remained without interruption all this time. He joined and became an officer of the Frostbite Society in 1959, remaining active with that group for 11 years.

It was in the early 1970s that Canty's political participation broadened to embrace some major community projects and levels of responsibility. His appointment to the Permanent School Building Committee led to chairing the Chandler School Building Committee, a facility that Canty was literally responsible for constructing.

No sooner had Chandler School opened its doors in 1973, but Canty was named an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals and soon thereafter, he became a full member. He's been there ever since. And along the way, he also accepted appointments to the town's Designer Selection Committee, Town Buildings Committee, and Affordable Housing Task Force.

While on the Town Buildings Committee, Canty did a complete analysis of the roof systems at Duxbury High School and the Intermediate (now Alden Elementary) School. During last year's debate over the closing of an elementary building, it was Canty who was called in by the school committee to analyze the building systems and handicapped accessibility sta-

We wonder if the current selectmen even realize how much Jack Canty has done for the town in the 40 years he has lived here. Jack's is a track record worth citing for its unmatched degree of commitment. It is thus not only his skills and technical expertise that we're losing, but his devotion to the community and passion for town politics. Those intangibles are much harder to replace.

Jack and Alice Canty moved to Duxbury in 1953. Within only a few years, he had joined a group of residents who comprised school committee candidate John Spence's campaign team. Spence won, which probably doesn't surprise any candidate for whom Jack Canty has worked over the years.

Canty's humor, technical proficiency as an engineer, candid appraisal of issues and prob-

tus of Alden Upper and Lower Schools, and Chandler, which he knew intimately.

In short, the Town of Duxbury has received tens of thousands of dollars in free professional engineering services from a guy who was never too busy to give town hall some extra help and the benefit of his knowledge. For example, Canty has not only served on the Designer Selection Committee, a group with statutory duties when the town retains architectural or engineering services on public building projects, but he set up a computerized protocol for evaluating design service proposals. He's helped out and advised the school department countless times, the library trustees, Harbormaster Don Beers while the new town pier was being designed and later, built, and countless others over time.

Jack is leaving public service for a variety of personal and professional reasons, largely to work on the master plan for a hospital's cogeneration plant in New York and then for some well-deserved travel.

He won't, however, be gone forever: Canty expects to be back in about 10 months. The selectmen would be wise to get him involved in town government again instead of losing such indispensable talent, energy, and loyalty. Skills can be found in abundance among Duxbury volunteers, but enthusiasm and love for the town; these attributes are priceless. They make for a perceptibly different caliber of public servant than do people who want a title, some power, and social status.

Unfortunately, town government is becoming more and more a haven for seekers of personal gain alone. That's why we need to keep people like Jack Canty involved — to keep other people honest.

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Founded by John & Roberta Cutler



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Words of Remembrance for Jack Canty

(Note: The following eulogy was delivered by School Superintendent Eileen Williams on August 18. -- Ed)

I am very honored to be here today to celebrate Jack Canty's life with you, his family, friends and colleagues.

I never looked at or talked with Jack that I didn't think of my own father. They were about the same age, shared a love of the ocean and were very proud of their Irish heritage. Both had served in the armed forces during World War II and understood the value of freedom and the commitment and effort it takes to maintain it. My father was a mechanical contractor while Jack was an engineer. Both were married to the one love of their lives, intelligent and educated women who had a place in the community in which they lived. Both were very proud of their children and bragged about their accomplishments.

When I first became superintendent in Duxbury in 1993, I asked who were the people in town who knew how to get things done. Jack was on everyone's list.

back at headquarters, would be gathered around his computer, mesmerized by his continual projections as the citizens voted throughout the day.

But what was so remarkable was not his success rate in this endeavor, as impressive as that was. What is really of note is that Jack never did this because he wanted anything from these officials once elected, a fact he made clear to them. He did it because he had a strong personal belief in people; that reasonable people will do the right thing and that it would be good for Duxbury.

His last campaign was the override for the school project. I shook many hands that day to celebrate our success for the children of this community. But for Jack it was a hug, for that big man with a heart to match, wrapped in his Irish fisherman's knit sweater.

The schools were always a special focus for Jack from the time his own children attended. Last year when we began to put together the School Building Committee for our current project, the largest capital project in the town's history,

School in 1973-74. From 1994-1998 he assisted with: renovating following the fire at DHS in 1994; retrofitting the schools to make them energy efficient in 1994; installing a new boiler at DMS in 1995; renovating the Alden School in 1997; and converting the Wright Building into a school annex in 1998.

We needed him for his experience with other town building projects and the approval process. Jack had served on the Zoning Board of Appeals, where he supported projects such as this beautiful church in which we gather today; the Designer Selection Committee; the Duxbury Roof Committee; the Senior Center Building Committee; the Waterfront Advisory Committee; the Audit Committee; the Town Strategic Planning Task Force; and the Ashdod Fire Station Committee.

We needed him because with him, we could recruit other talented professionals to the committee. No one EVER said "no" to Jack when he asked you to participate in something for the good of the

as a committee, Jack and I saw things differently on a particular issue. Now we were used to verbally jousting with one another with some passion. Sometimes we would do it because we disagreed and sometimes just for the fun of it. But I could see that some of the other members of the committee were a little uncomfortable at our exchange, not quite knowing what to make of it.

After the meeting was over, I went over to where Jack was sitting, put my hands on his shoulders, and said for everyone to hear, "Some of these people just don't understand that we Irish never discuss anything quietly." He laughed and the tension was gone.

One of the things that I treasured about my relationship with Jack was that we respected each other enough to disagree. And that he cared enough about the schools to always tell me honestly what he thought.

When we were working to renovate and reopen the Alden School, occasionally I would realize that Jack, who functioned much as a Clerk of the Works would on that project,

relationships with Jack.

Jack loved town government and he provided support and guidance to so many of us in what he recognized as difficult positions. He offered us the right balance of sympathy and a nudge to get on with it. We talked to him about our professional responsibilities and our personal lives and he responded with great wisdom and compassion. He gave us both the practical knowledge we needed and the philosophy and human background to understand.

Jack was an institution. He had great professional expertise, practical experience and common sense and he shared them freely, not for his own ego, but because he wanted to give back to the community he cherished for over 50 years.

But we all know that life was not the same for Jack without Alice. How extraordinary to have shared such a love and what an overwhelming loss to be without her.

I think our wishes for them both are summed up in an old Gaelic blessing:

He was a political animal, befitting his Dorchester roots. He understood the role of government in our lives and the need for rational, balanced and intelligent participation in the governmental process. He enjoyed assisting people with these qualities in the election process as they sought office.

Jack was the "guru". No one knew more about organizing a campaign, bringing people together as a team, identifying voter support and actually getting the voters to the polls. On election day, people

Jack's name wasn't even discussed, it was just understood that he was the cornerstone.

We needed him for his knowledge and expertise. In his professional career as an engineer, Jack had supervised major construction projects in Boston and Providence including Tufts New England Medical Center and New England Baptist Hospital.

He knew the construction history of the Duxbury Public Schools better than anyone. He served on the School Building Committee for the Chandler

town. No one would EVER have the nerve to say they were too busy, knowing what Jack gave to this community every day. No one EVER said Jack was not persistent when he wanted something or someone, and we all learned that it was just easier to comply, as we would in the end anyway.

And I needed Jack for the Building Committee because I knew that I would receive the best advice and counsel and empathy from him throughout the process.

In one of our early meetings

was doing something other than what we had, I thought, decided to do. So I would make an appointment to talk with Jack. He would show up at my office door and say, "I've been called to the Principal's office."

But he was, of course, totally unapologetic as he did what he did because he believed it to be in the best interests of the schools. Jack well understood the lyrics to "I Did It My Way".

I've spoken with many town officials and volunteers in the past couple of days and clear themes emerged about our re-

Deep peace of the running wave to you

Deep peace of the flowing air to you

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you

Deep peace of the shining stars to you

Deep peace of the watching shepherds to you

Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.